

Commissioner's Memo
9/3/2020

United States Department of Agriculture Extends Free Meals for Students Through December 31, 2020

Memo Information

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Memo Date 9/3/2020

Memo Type Regulatory

Unit Child Nutrition

Regulatory Authority 7CFR210.10 and 220.20

Response Required NO

Attention Superintendents; Child Nutrition Directors/Managers

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Memo Text

The purpose of this memo is to provide information and guidance to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and School Food Authorities (SFAs) concerning the August 31, 2020, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) press release announcing the extension of meals served at no cost to students under the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) through December 31, 2020. The purpose of the extension is to assure that children have access to nutritious meals while the nation recovers from COVID-19. During the pandemic, USDA has continued to provide flexibilities for the purpose of assisting families and assuring that children are fed whether they attend school in a classroom environment or as virtual students.

These actions carried out by USDA's Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) will allow:

- Reimbursable meals to be served at all schools at no cost regardless of the student's eligibility status (does not include a la carte items or individual items);
- Meals to be served outside of the typically-required group settings and meal times;
- Parents and guardians to pick-up meals for their children; and
- Waiver of meal pattern requirements as necessary;

It is the intent of USDA, and the Arkansas Department of Education, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Child Nutrition Unit (ADE, CNU) to assure that Arkansas children have access to the meals they need while maintaining the integrity of the Child Nutrition Programs.

Although students will receive meals at no charge through December 31, 2020, it is imperative that parents continue to work with their school districts in completing and submitting free and reduced meal applications. State and federal funds received by each district, are determined by the free and reduced percentages collectively from meal applications. Families who have not completed a meal applications are strongly encouraged to do so.

If you have questions email your district's Area Specialist or you may call them at 501-324-9502.

The press release is available at the following link:

<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/08/31/usda-extends-free-meals-kids-through-december-31-2020>